



## WILLOW CREEK RECLAMATION PROJECT; CREEDE, COLORADO

### Community-Based Approach To Environmental Protection

Even though mining brought economic viability and a higher quality of life to the area, esthetic, recreational, and natural resource values are still being negatively affected. To address these concerns, the *Willow Creek Reclamation Committee* was founded as a citizens group in late 1997 to characterize the contaminant problems in the watershed and to develop and perform cleanup activities. This effort will address water-quality issues in Willow Creek, restore the natural environment in the Willow Creek flood plain, and preserve the historic characteristics of the historic mining district.

Restoration plans are being developed that will preserve the character of the mining district and will help reduce the overall loading of contaminants to Willow Creek. Cleanup plans will also provide the backbone for TMDL development by the Colorado Dept. of Public Health & Environment.

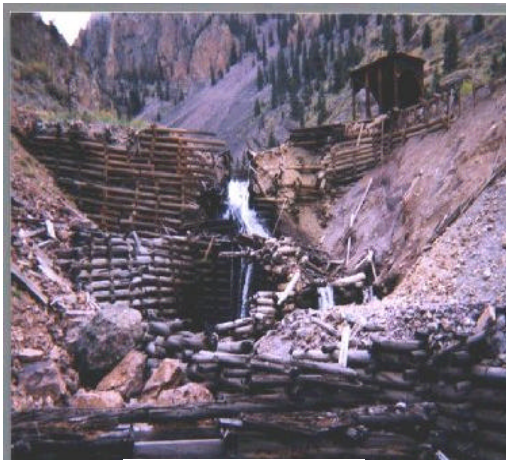


Historical Remnant of mine operations near Creede, CO.

**Setting and Environmental Threat:** Mining in the 1890's and on through the 1980's resulted in mine waste piles accumulating in the watershed and contaminated ground water discharging through mine openings reaching nearby Willow Creek. Much of Willow Creek is now physically and chemically altered and cannot sustain populations of fish and other species.

**Agency Assistance:** One of the highlights of this project is how government agencies have provided assistance to the Committee by responding to requests by with in-the-field expertise and various grant opportunities. Specifically, several Federal and State of Colorado agencies are developing partnerships and trust with the local community by participating in various activities including:

- USFS funding ground-water tracer study.
- NRCS designing stream-channel reconstruction.
- Colorado Department of Minerals and Geology 1) controlling physical hazards to prevent future contaminant releases, 2) Homestake Permit review.
- CDPHE providing Section 319 funding and project technical support.
- DOI leading sampling events, with all agencies participating.
- USACE fixing flume through Creede and supporting screening-level site characterization.
- USGS Stream tracing.
- USFWS and the Colorado Division of Wildlife assistance to determine aquatic standards and conditions needed to drive the cleanup.
- EPA technical support for ground water and surface water sampling, and grant money to perform mine reconnaissance.



Willow Creek

For more information about EPA's support for the Willow Creek Reclamation Committee, call Peter Ismert at 303-312-6215 or email [ismert.peter@epa.gov](mailto:ismert.peter@epa.gov)